

AMUSEMENTS.

Lawrence Barrett's Success in "Francesca da Rimini."

WITHDRAWAL OF "VERA."

The Coming Opera Season—A Brilliant Prospect.

CHATS WITH AIMEE, GRAU AND STRAKOSCH.

"FRANCESCA DA RIMINI"—STAR THEATRE.

Lanciotto, the hunchback.....Mr. Lawrence Barrett
 Count Paolo, his brother.....Mr. Otto Skinner
 Malatesta, Lord of Rimini.....Mr. B. G. Rogers
 Guido, Lord of Ravenna.....Mr. F. C. Mosley
 Meppo Peco, Malatesta's jester.....Mr. Louis James
 Cardinal Malaspin.....Mr. Errol Dunbar
 Rene, a troubadour.....Mr. Percy Winter
 Luciente.....Mr. W. A. Lacker
 Gramie.....Mr. J. L. Finney
 Vicentio.....Mr. W. F. Gerald
 Terelli.....Mr. A. T. Kiddle
 Lodovico, a page.....Master Eugene Sanger
 Marco, a page.....Master Herman Grossberg
 Captain, in Lanciotto's camp.....Mr. S. Dubois
 Officer of the castle.....Mr. W. S. Ward
 Francesca, Guido's daughter.....Miss Marie Wainwright
 Rita, her maid.....Miss Addi Plunkett

Last night the Star Theatre, late Wallack's, was formally opened for the season, and the familiar auditorium, always cosy and pretty, was discovered to have many improvements in its appearance since its doors closed last season. The old house has seldom held a larger audience than that which pressed into it last night, nor is it easy to recall a greater triumph within its walls than Mr. Barrett achieved. It has been said that tragedy is no longer popular in New York. If this is true the close attention with which Mr. Boker's play was regarded last night and the excitement to which the audience was frequently roused by Mr. Barrett's acting proved that for popularity there has been discovered a substitute which is remarkably like the original and fully as satisfactory to all concerned.

The plot of "Francesca da Rimini" has already been given in these columns. The play, as written by Mr. Boker and acted by Mr. Barrett and his company, is a naturalistic, almost a Puritan paraphrase of Dante's story, for the sympathy of the hearers is demanded and received by the injured husband instead of the guilty couple. Francesca is allowed as much pity as is due a woman who has been imposed upon by untruth, but as she afterward abandons herself to the very man who alone has been the cause of every disappointment and misery, it is impossible for any but the ultra-sentimental to exhibit even as much tender regret as severe Dante did. For Paolo the author affords no apology. The only sufferer by grief that is honorable is the deformed but tender-hearted husband.

Mr. Barrett's success as the deformed but valiant warrior, the sensitive gentleman and the deceived husband was artistic and complete. Tradition has invented hunchbacks with minds of ordinary subtlety and force. Whether this is right or wrong, Mr. Barrett makes the bridegroom's physical deformity an excuse for almost superhuman sensitiveness, tenderness, chivalry and earnestness as adorer of a woman unexpectedly brought into his life. He is as faultless as Othello in similar circumstances, but when he finds that he, as well as his bride, has been deceived, his vengeful spirit knows no bounds. Yet even in his madness there is method. He strikes his informant dead, not through anger, but because thereby the jester's tongue can be stopped wagging to the detriment of Francesca's name. All this is more suggestive of a modern hero than Dante's Lanciotto, just as the faithless brother and wife, as portrayed in the play, are more like the flesh and blood creatures of to-day than the couple over whose woes a dozen generations have dropped sentimental tears; but it makes the character when translated by an actor of Mr. Barrett's fine nervousness and magnetism first interesting and then fascinating. It certainly took hold of the audience last evening and became more engrossing as the play went on, until applause greeted nearly every speech and encores were so numerous that the audience ceased counting them.

The leading character was admirably supported. Miss Wainwright and Mr. Skinner have played together so long in parts somewhat similar that in Francesca and Paolo they could scarcely help being admirable. The remainder of the company were equal to their parts, and the management deserves the highest praise for the taste and money that have been expended on the dresses and scenes. A piece so superbly set has seldom been seen in New York.

THE UNION SQUARE THEATRE CLOSED.

The Union Square Theatre was closed yesterday and will not be reopened until September 10, when Mr. Charles Wyndham and his company begin an engagement. Mr. Perzel, the husband of Miss Marie Prescott, had reflected on the financial failure of Mr. Oscar Wilde's play, "Vera," and yesterday morning decided finally to discontinue the performance. The members of Miss Marie Prescott's company were engaged on terms which provided that the engagement could be broken by one week's notice.

Mr. Lewis Morrison said that he had not the least idea that "Vera" was to be withdrawn until he arrived at the theatre yesterday. The whole affair was very unfortunate, to the members of the company especially. He personally had spent \$500 in costumes, which was rather a heavy outlay for an engagement of only one week's duration.

Mr. Perzel said he had lost about \$15,000 on the production and was not prepared to risk any more at present. The company was dismissed and a new company would be organized for an autumn and winter season, for which some of the "Vera" company would perhaps be engaged. Mr. Wilde received a certain sum down for the play and was to have a royalty of \$50 a performance for 100 performances, which Mr. Perzel considered very extraordinarily high priced terms. Miss Marie Prescott has agreed to play it 100 times within a year. Both Miss Prescott and Mr. Wilde were very anxious to continue the engagement at the Union Square Theatre, but Mr. Perzel thought it best to close. Mr. Wilde, Mr. Perzel said, had said to him, "The great mistake I made was in not appearing as Alexis myself." The company assembled at the Union Square Theatre yesterday afternoon and received their salaries for last week. Miss Marie Prescott will rest until October 15, when she will begin a season on the road, playing "Vera" and Gauthier's "Cezela," which she played with success last spring in Brooklyn and Philadelphia. Mr. Perzel, in a letter to the HERALD, makes the following remarks:—

The papers of New York city have condemned Oscar Wilde's play "Vera." They have made an impression on the theatre-going public that "Vera" is an unattractive play. It is not in my power to correct this impression. I have neither the time nor the inclination to make any complaint against the critics. I only wish to state that the attitude of the press toward "Vera" kept the public from the theatre, consequently I am the principal sufferer. There is no doubt that "Vera" will become popular in other cities. I have that assurance from managers out of town who have seen the play. But for the present I am obliged to withdraw "Vera" in New York city and dismiss my company. My losses are very large so far and I am unable to run further risks. My dates out of town are cancelled up to October, when I will reorganize a company for Miss Prescott.

WHAT MR. WILDE SAYS.

Mr. Wilde was in the Union Square Theatre during the afternoon. In speaking to a HERALD reporter about the sudden withdrawal of "Vera" he said it was very unfortunate, and that he was convinced the play would have succeeded if the management and the company could have given it a longer trial. "I," he added, "have done my part well. I have written a good play, and that is all I pretended to do; I did not engage the company nor hire the theatre. I simply wrote a good play which has pleased the audience. Every night it has been well received by those in the house. In fact, the audiences have appeared to be keenly interested and pleased with the play. The curtain has frequently been raised, and Miss Prescott has been recalled every night. I was very anxious that the play should have been given in Boston, but as it has been decided to withdraw it I must bear my disappointment."

"What are your future plans?" the reporter asked.

"I shall return to England next week," Mr. Wilde answered.

"Then you will not appear on the American stage just yet?"

"No."

MR. SHERIDAN SNOOK'S STATEMENT.

When Mr. Sheridan Snook was asked the reason of the withdrawal of "Vera" from the stage of the Union Square Theatre he said:—

"The enterprise was not undertaken by this house nor did we have anything to do with it. The very contract for playing here had been signed before I bought Mr. Palmer's interest in the theatre. According to the arrangement he made the company appeared here. To-day I asked them to comply with the conditions agreed to. They complained that they were short of funds and had only enough money to pay the performers. They broke the terms of the agreement, and that was the end of it. As to the play itself the Union Square Theatre had nothing to do with it. The scenery was painted outside, the business was done outside, the whole affair was an outside matter."

THE SAN FRANCISCO MINSTRELS.

The San Francisco Minstrels opened their season, under the management of Mr. Billy Birch, last evening, and made a decided success with a lively and highly varied entertainment. The house was filled, and the old favorites met with a hearty welcome, while the new members of the com-

pany were very cordially received. The organization is a strong one. There are eight end men, who were highly successful last evening in their efforts to convulse the audience. Mr. Billy Birch, on his first appearance, was received with a hearty round of applause, and was presented with a floral horseshoe. The first part of the programme was admirably given, the songs, both grave and gay, being loudly applauded and some of them redemanded. In the second part "the only" Leon made a great success in his female impersonations which were very cleverly given. Messrs. Schoolcraft and Coe were heard in an amusing sketch, entitled "Music vs. Elocution." Mr. Bob Slavin was not less funny than usual in his absurd stories, and the Big Four made an instant hit in their sketch, "Wonders," and were recalled three times. The entertainment concluded with an afterpiece called "Her Majesty's Opera Company," which is an amusing travesty on the original. The audience was kept in a roar of laughter throughout the performance, and the jokes, some of them old and some of them new, were not received in silence.

Mlle. AIMEE'S RETURN.

After an absence from New York of nearly four years and from the lyric stage of almost an equal length of time, Mlle. Marie Aimée returned yesterday morning on the French steamer Normandie. A hundred friends were on the dock to welcome her. She was accompanied by Mr. Maurice Grau and the members of his French opera company, about forty in number, who will open the season at the Fifth Avenue Theatre. To a HERALD reporter the willow queen of opéra bouffe appeared to be the same charming Aimée as of old. The four years of absence had wrought no outward change in the famous artiste. Her eyes were just as bright, her face as well preserved, her step as jaunty, and her manner as attractive and vivacious. She was plainly but tastefully dressed in a travelling costume of dark blue, and wore a dark straw hat and dainty shoes.

"Glad to get back to New York?" I am indeed. There is no city, save my own, which I love so well as yours. I have always received the kindest treatment here, and in making my *rentrée* on the lyric stage here I have no fears, for I know that there will be nobody but friends in my audience."

"How long is it, Mlle. Aimée, since you have sung in opera?"

"Oh, scarcely any since I left New York. You know, I went to Brussels and caught cold in my throat, from which was developed the trouble which at one time seemed to have ruined my voice forever. I should have been here last season if my throat would have allowed. But, thanks to the skill of my physician in Paris, I am all right at last."

"And what are your plans?"

"We open, as you know, at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, where we shall play for four weeks. From there we go to Brooklyn, then Boston, Philadelphia, Cincinnati and other cities west; then south to Havana, Mexico and Vera Cruz. We shall probably finish the season of from eight to ten months by a return to New York; from thence home."

"Your repertoire?"

"Well, as far as New York is concerned we expect to give the "Princesse des Canaries," which has been such a success in Paris, and "Le Cœur et le Main," both substantially new in your city. Then I expect to appear in "Divorçons," in which I made a great hit in Paris with the Palais Royal troupe when my throat would not admit of my singing. Many of my friends declared my performance in the drama to be better than my opéra bouffe. We also hope to play "Niniche," which is new to New York, and for the sake of Mlle. Angèle, who made such a hit last winter, we must give "La Fille de Madame Angot." Whether any of the other old favorites will be given it is impossible to say—probably not during the first part of the season."

MR. MAURICE GRAU'S PLANS.

Mr. Maurice Grau was found by a HERALD reporter at the Fifth Avenue Theatre.

"You see I am losing no time," he said to a reporter as he turned to give an order for several thousand Aimée lithographs. "I brought a large party with me, nearly my entire opéra bouffe company, and we shall begin work almost at once."

"You have a strong company?"

"Yes, indeed, I think so. Aimée is a host in herself. Then, besides the old favorites, Mlle. Mézières and Duplan and Mlle. Angèle, and M. Nigri, who has been well received here before, I have several artists that are new to New York—Mlle. Nizan, for instance, who is a fine opéra bouffe artist from the Théâtre des Folies Dramatiques, Paris, and Mr. Guy, a very clever little comedian, from the same theatre. Ten musicians for the orchestra sailed by the St. Germain, but owing to the disaster to that vessel they will probably be detained for some time, but they will doubtless get over here in time for the opening of my season at the Fifth Avenue Theatre on September 10."

"What will be the opening piece?"

"Lecocq's new opera, 'Princesse des Canaries,' with Mlle. Aimée in the principal rôle. The repertoire will also include the 'Mascot' and 'Olivette,' in which Mlle. Aimée will appear for the first time in this country. Lecocq's 'Le Cœur et le Main,' 'La Jolie Parfumeuse,' 'Divorçons,' with Mlle. Aimée, and 'Boccaccio,' in which Mlle. Nizan will play the title rôle."

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE.

"How have the arrangements progressed for the Metropolitan Opera House season?"

"Admirably. Everything is completed. The work has been well and satisfactorily done. The heads of all the various branches of the company have looked after their special work with great success. Signor Vianesi, for instance, has got his orchestra; Mr. Rialp, the chorus master, has secured his chorus, and the ballet master, Signor Dancesi, has completed his ballet."

"Have there been any changes in the already published list of artists?"

"Not many. Signor Maini, the basso, has been released from his engagement at his own request and his place has been filled by Signor Mirabella. The full list of principals is as follows:—Soprano—Mme. Christine Nilsson, Mlle. Sembrich, Mme. Valeria, Mme. Fursch-Madi, Mlle. Forti and Mlle. Corani. Contralto—Mme. Scalchi, Mme. Trebelli, Mme. Lablache and Mlle. Lablache. Tenor—Signor Campanini, Signor Stagno, M. Capoul, Signor Fornaris and Signor Grazi. Baritone—Signor Cashmann, Signor Del Puente and Signor Guadagnini. Bassi—Signor Novara, Signor Mirabella, Signor Contini and Signor Corsini. Mlle. Cavalazzi will, you know, be the première danseuse assoluta. Mr. Parry, who was to have been the stage manager, is, I believe, held by a contract with Colonel Mapleson."

It was rumored that it was uncertain if Signor Stagno would come out here and also that Mme. Scalchi was going to desert Mr. Abbey.

Well, there is no truth in either of these rumors. Signor Stagno is positively engaged at a very high salary. He is a splendid tenor and a fine actor and will, I think, make a great hit here. Mme. Scalchi, too, will undoubtedly appear at the Metropolitan Opera House. I believe she objected somewhat to Mr. Abbey having engaged Mme. Trebelli and asked him to relieve her from her contract. Mr. Abbey said he would on the condition that she would not come to America under any other management. Mme. Scalchi did not press the matter further after that.

THE COMPANY.

"What will be the full strength of Mr. Abbey's company?"

"Well, in addition to the principals already mentioned, there will be a chorus of eighty voices, an orchestra of seventy-six musicians, picked from England, Germany, France and Italy; a military band, which will arrive from Europe in October, numbering twenty-five performers, and a ballet of thirty-two dancers."

"The company will be an expensive one?"

"Yes, the expense will be enormous. They will altogether amount to at least \$150,000 a month, and I think that the entire expense of opening the opera house, with scenery, costumes, advances to the company, travelling expenses, &c., will amount to \$300,000. There will be 6,000 new costumes, which are being made in Venice."

"What will be the repertoire?"

"Well it will consist of twenty-three operas. The season will positively open on October 22 with 'Faust,' with Mmes. Nilsson, Scalchi, Lablache, Signori Campanini, Del Puente and Novara. On the second night of the season 'Lucia' will be given for the American debut of Mlle. Sembrich, who I expect will surprise the public here. Signori Campanini and Cashmann will be in the 'Lucia' cast. Signor Stagno will make his debut in either 'I Puritani' or 'Robert le Diable.' Among the other operas will be 'Sonnambula,' with Mlle. Sembrich; 'Le Prophète,' with Mmes. Valleria and Scalchi and Signor Stagno; 'Mefistofele' with Mmes. Nilsson and Trebelli. Mme. Nilsson will also probably appear in 'Gloconda,' 'Otello,' 'Nozze de Figaro' and 'Don Giovanni.' M. Capoul will probably sing in 'Mignon' and one or two other operas which have been familiar in his repertoire."

MR. MAURICE STRAKOSCH.

Mr. Maurice Strakosch, who also arrived by the Normandie, is stopping at the Everett House. He said to a HERALD reporter yesterday that he had returned to New York earlier than he had intended owing to some misunderstanding about Miss Emma Thursby's engagements. "You see," he said, "Miss Thursby authorized me to make engagements for her in Europe, and I accepted operatic engagements for her in St. Petersburg, Rome and Vienna. I hoped Miss Thursby would have overcome her scruples about singing in opera. But she says friends are so opposed to her appearing in opera that she will accept no operatic engagements."

Mr. Strakosch showed the reporter a telegram from St. Petersburg saying that Miss Thursby could not be released from her engagement at the Imperial Theatre.

"You see," Mr. Strakosch continued, "I have really come back in such a hurry to try and coax Miss Thursby to alter her mind and sing in opera in Europe. If she will not I don't know what I shall do, as I have made so many engagements for her. If she still refuses to accept them she will have another concert tour in America, of which I shall, of course, be manager."

"Have you any other plans for the future?"

"Well, I am hoping to secure Mlle. Van Zandt, the

American prima donna and the star of the Paris grand opera, for concerts and opera in this country next year. I left the contract in Paris for her to sign, and I hope she has done so by this time."

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC NOTES.

Dr. George Leeming began his series of illustrated lectures at the Twenty-third Street Theatre last evening. There was a fair attendance and the lecturer met with a favorable reception.

The management of Haverly's Brooklyn Theatre opened the season of 1883-4 auspiciously last evening, introducing to their patrons "The Silver King," which recently enjoyed a successful run at Wallack's Theatre. The house was about two-thirds full and the spectators applauded the efforts of the company throughout.

The Adah Richmond Comedy Company appeared at the Windsor Theatre last evening in Mr. Lafitte Johnson's drama "Carrots." Miss Adah Richmond as Carrots, the Wild Flower, gave a lively and brisk performance and sang a number of songs which greatly pleased the audience, and Mr. L. E. Graham's acting and singing as Tony, the German, were well appreciated.

The Mount Morris Theatre was opened for the season last evening by Haverly's Comedy Company in the amusing play entitled "Our Strategists." The play was well put on and the various characters were all fairly taken. The house was well filled with an audience which showed its appreciation by frequent rounds of applause and loud laughter.

Sounds of revelry echoed through the Brooklyn Park Theatre last evening, where, under the mirth-provoking genius of Rice's Travesty Company, the season was opened with "Fun on the Bristol." The house, which has been handsomely renovated and embellished in many details during the vacation, presented a bright and cheerful appearance. The audience, though not large, was select, and by repeated hearty applause, which never failed to recognize good singing or a witty speech, gave evidence of the enjoyment derived from the entertainment.